

March 2004 Injury Prevention Newsletter

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1. State Fire Marshal's Office Issues Press Release

The State Fire Marshal's Office has issued a press release reminding Alaskans to be respectful of the danger of fire. Alaska reported 9 fire deaths for 2002 and 7 fire deaths for 2003. Two record breaking years of being in the single digits for fire fatalities. However, since January 1, 2004, 5 fire deaths have already occurred and Alaskans will need to be extra vigilant if they want to keep the state's numbers in the single digits this year. In four of the five deaths a smoke alarm was either not present or non-functional due to a missing battery. For more fire safety and prevention information contact Jodie Hettrick, jodie_hettrick@dps.state.ak.us or Mary Krom, mary_krom@health.state.ak.us. There was one fire death where other people in the home were alerted by a working smoke alarm and exited safely.

Change your clocks and check your smoke alarms!

Alaska returns to Daylight Savings Time on Sunday, April 4th. After "springing forward" the clocks in the home, take time to check the smoke alarms to see if they are functional. Change batteries as necessary, dust the units, install new ones if needed, and replace any smoke alarms that are 10 or more years old. When replacing older smoke alarms, replace battery only and hard wired alarms as well as any hard wired smoke alarms that do not have a battery back-up system.

2. More on CO Monitors in Alaska

The Municipality of Anchorage has a new ordinance requiring new and remodeled homes to have carbon monoxide monitors hard wired in their homes. Plug in monitors will be sufficient in existing homes. The ordinance was reported on in the Anchorage Daily News on March 18, 2004. Read the amend ordinance at:

<http://www.muni.org/iceimages/Assembly2/AO2004-64.pdf>

A similar proposal, House Bill 351, is moving through the Alaska Legislature.

3. Spring Time Cautions

It's that time of year...although the calendar says springtime, Alaska says, well...maybe. The Alaska State Troopers remind people that rivers and lakes are unstable in a lot of areas and to always file a trip plan when traveling into the wilderness. The Alaska State Trooper trip plan might make that easier and can be found at: <http://www.dps.state.ak.us/pjo/>. Click on Wilderness Trip Plan under "quick links."

4. Anti-huffing Program for Teenagers in Alaska

Alaska is one of six states that will participate in an anti-huffing program sponsored by the Alliance for Consumer Education and the American School Counselor Association as reported in the *Anchorage Daily News* on March 15, 2004. See the complete announcement at: <http://www.adn.com/alaska/story/4853440p-4790090c.html>

5. Reducing Road Deaths

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and its' National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) along with the World Health Organization (WHO) are sponsoring **Family Road Safety** on World Health Day, April 7, 2004. Meanwhile, in March 22, 2004, *USA Today*, it was reported that U.S. Transportation Secretary, Norm Mineta, is pushing to save 13,000 lives a year through traffic laws and regulations. The three areas Secretary Mineta is focusing his program on are seat belts, drunken driving and truckers. See the article at: http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2004-03-22-road-deaths_x.htm

6. Student Suicide Prevention Programs

The March issue of the *American Journal of Public Health* reported that the SOS High School Suicide Prevention Program showed a 40% reduction in suicide attempts where high school students were exposed to the program. Along with the reduction of suicide attempts, researchers found there was improvement in knowledge and adaptive attitudes in the intervention groups compared to the control groups. Learn more about this program at: http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org/sos_highschool/

7. CPSC Product Recalls and Safety Information: Safety Warning on Paintball Guns.

On March 24th CPSC released a new safety warning for paintball guns. The warning is based on two deaths from carbon dioxide canisters flying off paintball guns. Users are advised to not unscrew the brass or nickel-plated valve that connects directly to the canister when removing the canister assembly from a paintball gun. See more about this safety warning at: <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prere/phtml04/04105.html>

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission tracks injuries or deaths in over 15,000 consumer products. To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, call CPSC's hotline at 800 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at 800-638-8270. Other information and product recalls are available on their website: www.cpsc.gov.

8. Beware of Exploding Beer

As it snows out, it is hard to believe that it might ever be hot enough to explode beer bottles in Alaska. Well, maybe they'll explode because they're frozen. However, Wang Qianhu, director of the China Consumers' Association's complaint and law department, found that beer bottle explosions were responsible for most of last summer's consumer injuries when it came to food safety issues.

This newsletter has been compiled by the Section of Community Health & EMS (CHEMS), Alaska Division of Public Health and sent to subscribers of the AK-Prev and AHHELP list-serves. It has also been sent as a "bcc" to others in Alaska including Public Health Centers, SAFE KIDS coalitions, Native Health organizations, and regional EMS Councils and Coordinators who may be interested and active in injury prevention and health promotion. The purpose is to share resources, breaking news, training opportunities, product recalls, and opinions to help prevent injuries to Alaskans. Feedback and contributions are encouraged. Contributions can be directed to Karen Lawler, (907)465-8632, karen_lawler@health.state.ak.us